

Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Investment Strategies Committee

Final Meeting Summary *Approved October 25, 2000*

October 4, 2000

Present: Dale Stedman, Chair, Bruce Anderson, Ted Bottiger, Don Briscoe, Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, Peter Hurley, Bettie Ingham, Andrew Johnsen, Charles Mott, Patricia Otley

Absent: Bill Lampson, Vice-Chair, Representative Shirley Hankins, John Kelly,

The Committee Chair called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The Committee approved the summary of the May 10th meeting as drafted.

The Chair asked Committee members when they would be available for another meeting in late October. The Committee scheduled an additional Investment Strategies Committee meeting for October 25th.

Doug Beighle, Chair of the Commission, reminded the Committee that they were now approximately sixty days from finishing their work, and need to move the process along as quickly as possible. He encouraged the Committee members to work in the same spirit of openness, flexibility, and collaboration as they have at past retreats and meetings.

DEVELOPING THE FINAL INVESTMENT STRATEGIES REPORT

Chris Mefford, consultant to the Commission, reviewed the structure of the Draft Investment Strategies Report. It begins with a brief introduction, followed by some background information on the Commission and the Investment Strategies Committee, a description of the methods used in writing the report, report organization, report framework, investment policies, and finally the appendices.

FRAMEWORK

Terry Moore, consultant to the Commission, led the Committee in a discussion of the framework section of the report.

Overview of Investment Strategies

The charter of the Investment Strategies Committee charges the Committee to “Recommend critical state, regional, and local transportation investment to be achieved within the next 20 years.” In the report, it is noted that, “This investment strategy cannot deal, project by project, with specific proposed transportation investments around the state. It needs to give general guidelines on the types of projects that are likely to be most desirable, and some guidance to allow regions and WSDOT to make efficient and fair selections of projects.” Some Committee members raised concerns that these two statements are contradictory. They suggested that the report be more specific in terms of which projects (or categories of projects) the Committee would recommend. They were also concerned that the general public would not be satisfied with just a set of policies, but would demand a list of projects – not just *how*, but *what*. Other committee members did not see an inconsistency in the two statements. They believed that recommendations for local and state planning and programming practices, which set up some criteria for the selection of projects, do indeed meet the charge of the Committee. The recommendations of the Committee will provide specific and illustrative examples. One Committee member noted that the decisions sought by the dissatisfied Committee members (project prioritization and a detailed level of analysis) are in fact, the responsibility of the Legislature. Another Committee member observed that the Committee’s charter asked for a set of standards, not a list of projects. For example, regarding road maintenance and preservation, the Committee recommends a maintenance standard of C+ and a preservation standard of least-life-cycle cost, rather than discussing a specific stretch of highway from milepost # to milepost #. The Chair noted that the Committee is being as specific as a committee of this type can be, with its time and financial resources. He also noted that at the beginning of the process, the Committee decided not to create a project list. It was suggested that the recommendations of the Investment Strategies Committee should be linked to the benchmarks provided by Benchmarks Committee.

Doug Beighle, Chair of the Commission, explained the Commission’s effort in transportation modeling. The Steering Committee asked consultants to do some analysis in an attempt to close the gap between the benchmarks and a list of specific projects or project types. That work has been underway and continues, but the Commission has found it very difficult, primarily due to a lack of resources and time. The Steering Committee had hoped to produce something robust, i.e., if we spend this amount of money in these corridors, congestion delays will be reduced by this much. Unfortunately, that has not occurred. And though frustrating, the Commission needs to make the concession that it does not have the resources or time to do the work that others will have to do. Beighle noted that the Committee might conclude that the best thing it can do is come up with policy and planning standards that can be used to determine the right set of investments. When asked why Commission efforts in modeling were not initiated when the Commission was established two years ago, Beighle emphasized the enormous amount of money and time that complex modeling of this type requires.

It was suggested that in light of the struggles of the Committee and staff in obtaining complete and accurate data and modeling, the Committee should recommend an

investment in the development of improved transportation modeling and analysis. Increased and more accurate information would make a significant step in better planning and decision-making. Given the significance of the decisions (billions of dollars), and given what the Committee has discovered about the complexities and the state of the art; spending some money now so better decisions can be made in the future seems like a good investment. It was noted that public is generally interested in action, not more studies. In response to that concern, it was noted that the Investment Strategies Report contains a chokepoint analysis that identifies critical areas needing immediate attention. It was also suggested that the Committee include an early action strategy. This piece could suggest the low cost and easily implemented recommendations such as Transportation System Management (TSM) and Commute Trip Reduction (CTR), which would produce immediate results.

Guiding Principles

Delete the “What, where, and how” graphic because it is redundant and difficult to read.

It was suggested that the paragraph discussing the relationship between the Commission Benchmarks and the Investment Strategies recommendations be highlighted to emphasize its importance and more clearly stated.

INVESTMENT POLICIES

The Chair led the Committee in a discussion of the Investment Policies section of the report. The following summary organizes the comments by the corresponding policy.

Investment Component 1: Preserve the Transportation System

Some Committee members raised questions about the validity and consistency of the dollar figures in the Washington State maintenance and preservation 20-year needs table towards the end of the Investment Component 1 section. Staff noted that work is currently being done to update these figures, and efforts will be made to ensure consistency throughout the document. The Chair noted that the Committee should not get hung up trying to identify an exact dollar figure representing needs – it is impossible to determine. The dollar figures that the Committee gathered are from several plans and sources - some are wants, some are genuine needs, all are changing, and all are difficult to prove. The significance lies in the recognition that the need is tremendous, whether it be \$108 billion or \$164 billion.

Policy 1. Prioritize and fund all preservation and maintenance needs of the existing transportation infrastructure in the state.

Replace “rehabilitation” with “preservation”.

Add language from the options summary regarding operations and maintenance of other modes such as transit and ferries and rail.

It was also noted that a glossary of terms should be added to the report.

Policy 2. Use the most cost-effective pavement surfaces available based on durability.

Add a sentence clarifying that the Committee is not suggesting that all roads everywhere be paved, but that in many places, a higher pavement standard should be considered where it is cost-effective and appropriate.

Policy 3. Phase out studded tires or establish a premium tax to limit their use.

It was suggested that another alternative to banning studded tires would be to issue a refund for them.

Policy 4. Develop a utility cut ordinance for use throughout the state.

It was suggested that the Committee recommend requiring those who make utility cuts to pay back the taxpayers for the damages they impose. Commissioner Peter Hurley will provide Committee staff information on a similar policy recently enacted in the City of Seattle.

Investment Component 2: Optimize the Transportation System

Policy 5. Traffic System Management (TSM) and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) policies should be implemented where effective.

Add a bullet suggesting real time transit information.

Strike “retrofitting streets and arterials for non-motorized travel opportunities” because it is not an example of traffic and incident management.

Policy 6. Traffic Demand Management (TDM) policies should be used to reduce demand on the highway system.

The Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Task Force sent the Blue Ribbon Commission a letter including seven recommendations such as additional funding and expansion policies. Staff will review the letter and update CTR information and figures.

Move “For example, companies that achieve desired levels of trip reduction might receive a reduction in property taxes comparable to the annual savings they create by reducing demand on the transportation system” to a more appropriate place, and insert a different incentive example.

Add a safety factor to the park & ride lots policy.

Policy 7. Jurisdictions should integrate transportation and land use planning.

One Committee member raised a concern with the accuracy of the second sentence, “Affecting land use decision-making processes is difficult because the authority remains within the city and county governments.” She noted that under GMA and concurrency, counties are required to tie transportation and land use. However, at the state level, it is a consideration but not a requirement. There was concern that this sentence implies that the obstacle to transportation and land use integration is the local jurisdictions. Commissioner Bettie Ingham will rewrite and submit to staff.

Expand references to location efficient mortgages to commercial as well as residential properties.

Add a bullet regarding the elimination of smart growth barriers such as parking lot minimums. Use language from Option B4 of the Investment Strategies Committee Interim Report.

Investment Component 3: Expand the Transportation System

Policy 9. Make cost-effective system expansions in critical corridors.

Move the inventory of needs table to an appendix with detailed discussion of the numbers. It will exist as supporting information for conclusions that go into the body of the report, and be used as a reference rather than as an endorsement.

Investment Component 4: Improve the Process

Policy 10. Benefit-cost analysis should be used as an aid in selecting the most effective transportation investments.

Add multimodal and network-oriented as characteristics of benefit-cost analysis.

Highlight the need for coordination among agencies and for improved transportation data and modeling.

Policy 12. The transportation decision-making process should be concentrated into a regional approach, with revenue authority granted to regions to address their high priority needs.

Use language from the Administration Committee options that includes planning, coordination, funding and implementation.

Policy 13. Invest in the human resources necessary to supply the technical workforce capable of maintaining, preserving, and improving the transportation system.

Add a sentence stating that Washington does not currently have the workforce necessary to do the job.

APPENDIX A - CHOKEPOINT ANALYSIS

An official traffic engineering definition of “chokepoint” does not exist. The report defines a chokepoint in terms of 100 hours of person delay per lane mile. It was suggested that staff translate this into a more easily understandable figure.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The Chair noted that if Committee members have additional suggestions regarding language in the document, they should send those comments to Mike Doubleday.

Kjris Lund briefly explained the process of putting together the final Committee reports and final Commission report.

The Committee adjourned at 12:00 p.m.